

The Holocaust and Modern Study of Ancient Jewish Rebels

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DRS, "On Christian Study of the Zealots," in DRS, *Studies in the Jewish Background of Christianity* (1992), 128-146

Jewish Rebellions against Rome

- 63 BCE – 40 – seven waves, led by Aristobulus II and his sons
- 4 BCE after Herod's death
- 6 CE upon Roman annexation of Judea – led by Judas the Galilean
- 6—66 various outbreaks under Roman governors, esp. towards 66
- 66-73/4 Judean rebellion, culminating with fall of Jerusalem (70) and Masada (73/74 - which was commanded by Judas the G's grandson, Eleazar b. Yair)
- 115—117 rebellion(s?) in Diaspora
- 132-135 Bar-Kochva rebellion in Judea

It all began with a card catalogue

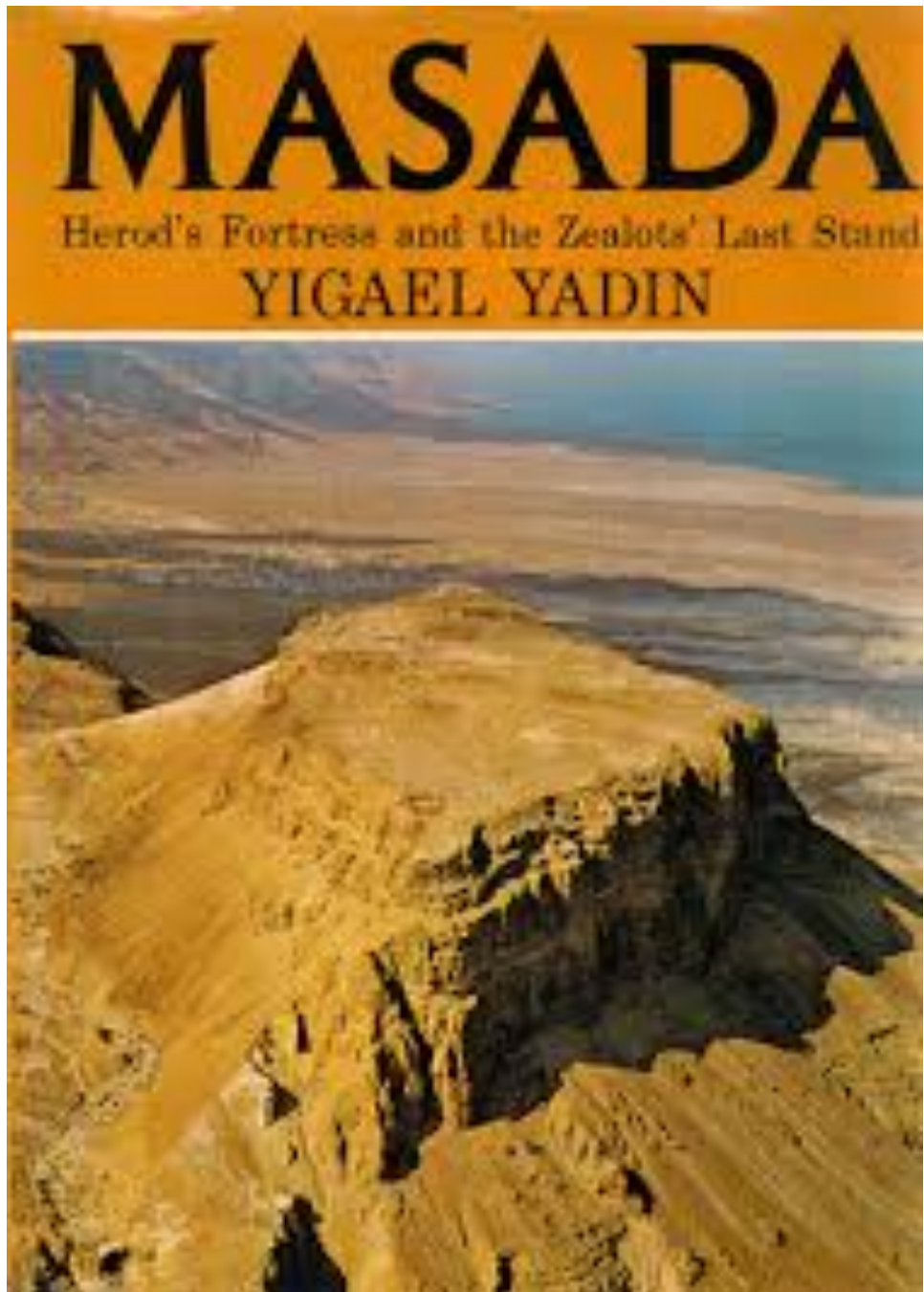
Vol. 12 of the catalogue of the Ecole biblique (Jerusalem), published in 1986, has 28 items under Zélotes - **all between 1958 and 1976. Similarly:**

- W. R. Farmer, *Maccabees, Zealots, and Josephus: An Inquiry into Jewish Nationalism in the Greco-Roman Period* (**1956**)
- M. Hengel, *Die Zeloten* (**1961**; 2nd ed. in English in 1989: *The Zealots*)
- Y. Yadin, *Masada: Herod's Fortress and the Zealots' Last Stand* (**1966**)
- M. Aberbach, *The Roman-Jewish War (66-70 A.D.): Its Origin and Consequences* (**1966**)
- M. Stern, "Zealots", *Encyclopaedia Judaica Year Book* **1973**, 135-152
- D. M. Rhoads, *Israel in Revolution, 6-74 C.E.: A Political History Based on the Writings of Josephus* (**1976**)
- U. Rappaport (ed.), *Rome and Judea: the Judean Revolts* (World History of the Jewish People, vol. 11; **1983**)

Why?

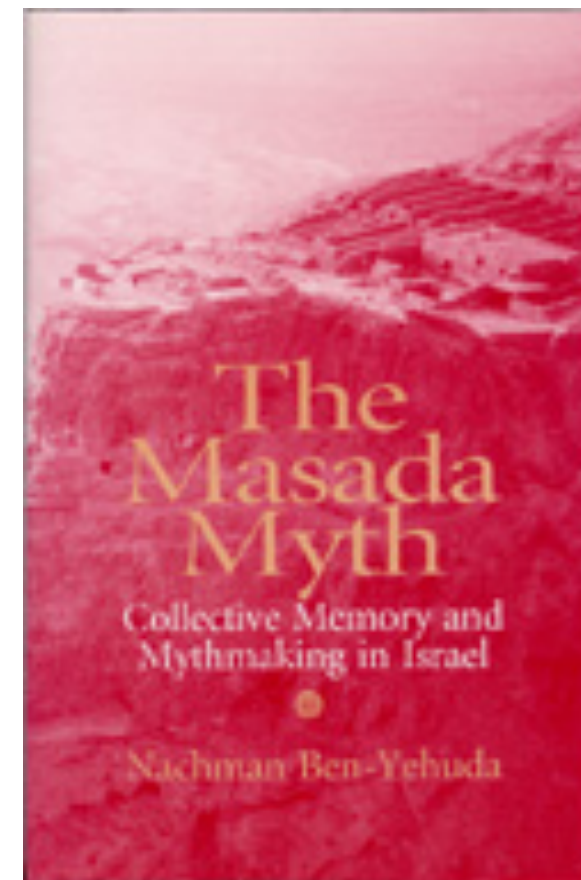
Direct route:

- Sects, especially since Qumran finds in 1947; even some attempts to make Qumran sectarians into “Zealots” (esp. on basis of *War of Sons of Light and Sons of Darkness*)
- State of Israel – militant Jewish nationalism on the map; Klausner’s כשאומה נלחמת על חרותה (*When a People Fights for Its Freedom*), with essays on Judah Maccabee, “heroes of Masada”, John of Gischala, Simon bar Giora, and Bar Kochva, went through eleven editions between 1936 and 1960
- Masada Excavations – with much fanfare



1966

מצדה – בימים
ההם - בזמן הזה,
1964



1995

Four readers on ancient Jewish history published by the Historical Society of Israel, 1973-1983:

Jews and Judaism in the Eyes of the Hellenistic World (ed. M. Stern, 1973/74)

The Jewish Revolts in the Days of Trajan (115-117 CE) (ed. D. Rokeah, 1977/78)

The Bar-Kokhba Rebellion (ed. A. Oppenheimer, 1989/80)

A. Kasher (ed.), *The Great Jewish Revolt: Factors and Circumstances Leading to its Outbreak* (1983)

But by 1980s, between Yom Kippur War and then Lebanese War, wars lost their luster

Bezalel Bar-Kochva, *Judas Maccabaeus: The Jewish Struggle against the Seleucids* (1989; Hebrew in 1980/81)

Bezalel Bar-Kochva, "The Perception of the Battles of Judas Maccabaeus and Their Impact on Modern Israel" in *Antike in der Moderne* (ed. W. Schuller, 1985), pp. 15-23

Yehoshafat Harkabi, *The Bar Kokhba Syndrome: Risk and Realism in International Relations* (1983; Hebrew in 1982 as *חזון, לא פנטזיה : לקחי מרד בר כוכבא וריאליזם* (במדיניות בימינו))

Ancient Jewish History – A Christian Pursuit

Emil Schürer, *Lehrbuch der neutestamentlichen Zeitgeschichte* (1873)

Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes im Zeitalter Jesu Christi (2-3 vols.; 3-4 editions until 1901-1909)

The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 BCE – AD 135) (new English ed. by G. Vermes; 3 vols.; 1973 – 1987). Includes, in vol. II, a nine-page “Appendix B: The Fourth Philosophy: Sicarii and Zealots,” *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ, II* (**1979**), 598-606.

And Josephus, our main source, gives little reason for Christians to take an interest in ancient Jewish rebels

- After all, Josephus lists, a few times, only three types of Judaism (Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes).
- True, he does mention, once (*Ant.* 18.9) a “Fourth Philosophy” of rebels, but he condemns them as foreign/innovative/heretical, and anyway they are involved in revolt against Rome – a political project.
- So not much reason for students of ancient Jewish theology, or those interested particularly in Jesus (who was a religious figure), should be interested in such rebels. Indeed, Schürer has no chapter on rebels. **So what happened in the 1960?**

Two Dilemmas for Christians of Conscience after the Holocaust

1. How could Christians not have opposed the Nazi state, and even collaborated with it?

But how could they have opposed the Nazi state, given Paul's admonition: "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God" (Romans 13:1)?

2. Who was responsible for death of Jesus? Is it not the case, that Christian blaming of the Jews contributed to antisemitism?

But if the Jews were not responsible, then Pilate was – and what reason could he have had to kill Jesus? Wasn't he peace-loving, turning the other cheek, otherworldly?

The first question, about Rom 13:1, led to lots of soul-searching, and exegetical creativity

Main item: Oscar Cullmann, *The State in the New Testament* (1956 + German, French, Swedish, Italian, Portuguese)

E. Käsemann, "Römer 13,1–7 in unserer Generation," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 56 (1959): 316–376

L. Pohle, *Die Christen und der Staat nach Röm 13, 1-7 in der neueren deutschsprachigen Schriftauslegung* (1981)

But whatever may be done with the exegesis of Paul, to get around Rom 13:1: What if Jesus were a rebel against Rome? That could solve both problems.

Entry from Harvard Library Catalogue

Arbeiten zur Geschichte des späteren Judentums und des Urchristentums

Leiden : Brill, 1968-

Bd. 6-Bd. 7.

German

Continues: Arbeiten zur Geschichte des Spätjudentums und Urchristentums. >

Continued by: Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums >

1968-

= Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity (since 2006)

The first volume in this series

Title	Die Zeloten : Untersuchungen zur jüdischen Freiheitsbewegung in der Zeit von Herodes I. bis 70 n. Chr.
Attribution	von Martin Hengel .
Author / Creator	Hengel, Martin >
Published	Leiden : Brill, 1961.
Description	xiv, 406 p. ; 25 cm.
Series / collection	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des Spätjudentums und Urchristentums ; Bd. 1 >
Series (transcribed)	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des Spätjudentums und Urchristentums ; 1
Language	German
Notes	Originally published as the author's thesis (doctoral)--Eberhard-Karls-Universität in Tübingen, 1959. Bibliography: p. [391]-406.

Hengel's main point: the Zealots were religious

This argument, based to significant extent on “zeal” (Pinchas, Elijah), as well as on rabbinic approval of “zealots” (קנאים), entails much argument against:

a. Josephus, our main source, who denigrates the rebels and portrays them as “innovators” = heretical deviants from Jewish tradition; Hengel argues about Josephus's apologetic needs and bias.

b. Joseph Klausner, who praises them as ancient Jewish nationalists (Zionists); Hengel basically holds that interpreting the first century in line with modern secular Zionism is anachronistic.

Hengel's view means that a religious Jew could be a rebel against Rome. For example: Jesus of Nazareth.

Jesus/Zealots/Trial of Jesus -- boom in the 1960s

- Paul Winter, *On the Trial of Jesus* (1961); 2nd ed., 1974, lists 70+ reviews
- Joel Carmichael, *The Death of Jesus* (1962)
- J. C. McRuer, *The Trial of Jesus* (1964)
- S. G. F. Brandon, *Jesus the Zealot* (1967)
- S. G. F. Brandon, *The Trial of Jesus of Nazareth* (1968)
- Haim Cohn, *The Trial and Death of Jesus* (Hebrew 1968; English 1971)
- H. Van der Klwaak, *Het Proces van Jezus* (1969)
- W. R. Wilson, *The Execution of Jesus: A Judicial, Literary and Historical Investigation* (1970)
- D. R. Catchpole, *The Trial of Jesus: A Study in the Gospels and Jewish Historiography from 1770 to the Present Day* (1971)
- H. Maccoby, *Revolution in Judaea: Jesus and the Jewish Resistance* (1973)

But then the Bubble Burst:

1. Cold feet about Jesus

- O. Cullmann, *Jesus and the Revolutionaries* (1970)
- M. Hengel, *Was Jesus a Revolutionist?* (1971; German 1970)
- H. Maccoby, “Is the Political Jesus Dead?”, *Encounter* 46/2 (Feb. 1976), 80-89

Once all anti-Roman rebels were called “Zealots”

ZEALOTS AND SICARII, THEIR ORIGINS AND RELATION

MORTON SMITH

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NEW YORK CITY, NEW YORK 10027

*Harvard
Theological Review,*
1971

It has long been the common opinion that the Zealots were the party founded by Judas the Galilean — so Graetz and Jost, for instance, writing in the middle of the past century.¹ Derenbourg, it is true, observed that the term “Zealots” was not applied to the opponents of the Romans before the revolt, but when he came to the events of the revolt he made a descendant of Judas, Menahem, the leader of the Zealots and so apparently assumed the connection of the party with Judas.² Schürer’s adherence canonized the common opinion, and also the common description of the *Sicarii* as a more fanatical fraction of the party — though the sources contain nothing to suggest that the party had split before the *Sicarii* appeared.³ Hence, with only minor variations, Eduard Meyer,⁴ Bousset,⁵ Baron,⁶ and Yadin’s account of the Zealots in Masada,⁷ to name only the largest studies.⁸

No permanent peace was gained, however, but only a truce of uncertain duration. Judas of Gamala in the Golan, called the Galilean (he is no doubt identical with Judas son of Hezekiah mentioned on p. 332), made it his mission in company with a Pharisee named Zadduk to

Schürer, 1973

rouse the people to resistance and preach revolt and insurrection in the name of religion. They met with no significant success at first, but were nevertheless responsible for the emergence, as an offshoot from the Pharisees, of a stricter and more fanatical party of resolute patriots, or as they called themselves, activists or Zealots, unwilling to wait in quiet submission for the fulfilment, with God's help, of Israel's messianic hope, but desirous rather of bringing it to reality by means of the sword in battle against the godless enemy.¹²⁸ It was due to their activities that the spark of rebellion continued to smoulder for sixty years, when it finally burst into flame.¹²⁹

Of Coponius and some of his successors little more is known than their names. Altogether there were seven—possibly only six—prefects who held office as governors of Judaea from A.D. 6 to 41. (1) Coponius, about A.D. 6 to 9, *B.J.* ii 8, 1 (117); *Ant.* xviii 2, 2 (29–31); (2) Marcus Ambibulus, named in our manuscripts Ambibuchus, about A.D. 9 to 12, *Ant.* xviii 2, 2 (31); (3) Annius Rufus about A.D. 12 to 15, *Ant.* xviii 2, 2 (32–3);¹³⁰ (4) Valerius Gratus A.D. 15 to 26, *Ant.* xviii 2, 2 (33);

^{128.} *Zēλωται*, see Lk. 6:15; Acts 1:13; Jos. *B.J.* iv 3, 9 (160); 4, 6 (291); 5, 1 (305); 6, 3 (377); vii 8, 1 (268). Instead of the *קָנָן* of Biblical Hebrew, later Hebrew and Aramaic use also *קָנָא* and *קָנָן* (see Levy, *Neuhebr. Wörterbuch*, and Jastrow, *Dictionary*, s.v.). From the plural of the latter form (*קָנָנִים*) is derived the Greek *Kananaïos* which should be read in Mt. 10:4 and Mk. 3:18 rather than *Kanavirns*. For recent treatments of the subject see W. R. Farmer, *Maccabees, Zealots and Josephus* (1957); M. Hengel, *Die Zeloten* (1961)—the major modern study; S. G. F. Brandon, *Jesus and the Zealots* (1967); M. Smith, 'Zealots and Sicarii: their Origins and Relations', *HThR* 64 (1971), pp. 1–19; S. Applebaum, 'The Zealots: the Case for Reevaluation', *JRS* 61 (1971), pp. 156–70; M. Borg, 'The Currency of the Term "Zealot"', *JThSt* 22 (1971), pp. 504–12.

^{129.} Cf. in general *B.J.* ii 8, 1 (118), *Ant.* xviii 1, 1 (4–10), Acts 5:37. The descendants of Judas also distinguished themselves as Zealots. His sons Jacob and Simon were executed by Tiberius Julius Alexander, *Ant.* xx 5, 2 (102); his son (or grandson?) Menahem (Manaim) was one of the principal leaders at the beginning of the rebellion in A.D. 66, *B.J.* ii 17, 8–9 (433–48). A descendant of Judas and relative of Menahem by the name of Eleazar directed the defence of Masada in A.D. 74, *B.J.* ii 17, 9 (447); vii 8, 1 (253); 8, 2 (275); 8, 6–7 (320–88); 9, 1 (399). See Yigael Yadin, *Masada: Herod's Fortress and the Zealots' Last Stand*

The bubble burst:

2: Scholarly Recognition that not all rebels were Zealots

Main argument: Josephus first mentions “Zealots” with reference to 66 CE (*War* 2.564, 651), and distinguishes them from other rebels in list at *War* 7.259ff. (next slide)

(so already: S. Zeitlin, “Zealots and Sicarii,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 81 (1962): 395-398. But he had excluded himself from “the guild” by denying antiquity of Dead Sea Scrolls)

B. Salmonsén, “Some Remarks on the Zealots with Special Regard to the Term ‘Qannaim’ in Rabbinic Literature,” *New Testament Studies* 13 (1965/66): 163-176

P. Kingdon, “Who Were the Zealots and Their Leaders in A.D. 66?,” *New Testament Studies* 17 (1970): 68-72

M. Smith, “Zealots and Sicarii: Their Origins and Relation,” *Harvard Theological Review* 64 (1971): 1-19 (part of general theme of his – plurality of sects and parties)

S. Appelbaum, “The Zealots: The Case for Reevaluation,” *Journal of Roman Studies* 61 (1971): 155-170

Marc Borg, “The Currency of the Term ‘Zealot,’” *Journal of Theological Studies* 22 (1971): 504-512

Josephus, *War* 7.262-269 (tr. Thackeray)

wealthy. The Sicarii were the first to set the example of this lawlessness and cruelty to their kinsmen, leaving no word unspoken to insult, no deed untried to ruin, the victims of their conspiracy. Yet even they were shown by John to be more moderate than

himself. For not only did he put to death all who proposed just and salutary measures, treating such persons as his bitterest enemies among all the citizens, but he also in his public capacity loaded his country with evils innumerable, such as one might expect would be inflicted upon men by one who had already dared to practise impiety even towards God. For he had unlawful food served at his table and abandoned the established rules of purity of our forefathers; so that it could no longer excite surprise, that one guilty of such mad impiety towards God failed to observe towards men the offices of gentleness and charity. Again, there was Simon, son of Gioras: what crime did not he commit? Or what outrage did he refrain from inflicting upon the persons of those very freemen who had created him a despot?^a What ties of friendship or of kindred but rendered these men more audacious in their daily murders? For to do injury to a foreigner they considered an act of petty malice, but thought they cut a splendid figure by maltreating their nearest relations. Yet even their infatuation was outdone by the madness of the Idumaeans. For those most abominable wretches, after butchering the chief priests,^b so that no particle of religious worship might continue, proceeded to extirpate whatever relics were left of our civil polity, introducing into every department perfect lawlessness. In this the so-called Zealots excelled, a class which justified their name by their actions; for they copied every deed of ill, nor was there any previous villainy recorded in

But if Zealots didn't exist until 66, then Jesus (d. 30) wasn't a Zealot.

Borg, *Journal of Theol. Studies*, 1971, 510 (end of article):

Conclusions

We can thus see that the consensus in favour of the currency of the term 'Zealot' during the ministry of Jesus is founded on one and only one ambiguous item of evidence, Luke vi. 15. Should ζηλωτής there be translated with a capital Z or lower-case z? Against the translation of it with a capital Z as a party designation is the consistent witness of Josephus that the term was restricted to the war of A.D. 66–70, a restriction which cannot be explained by his known tendency to vilify the resistance fighters. Moreover, it makes sense to seek an explanation for his concealment of the term only when there is evidence that the term was in use, which is precisely the evidence we lack. In our opinion, the consistency of Josephus and the silence of the other sources tips the scale in favour of a lower-case z: Simon 'the zealous one', for there is no evidence that it was a party designation until A.D. 66.³

Zealot

Luke 6: And when it was day, he called his disciples, and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles; [14] Simon, whom he named Peter, and Andrew his brother, and James and John, and Philip, and Bartholomew, [15] and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon **who was called the Zealot**, [16] and Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

Which left Hengel and others the task of reasserting a basic unity among the rebels without having to make a specific claim about Jesus

Hengel, "Zealots and Sicarii: the Question of the Unity and Diversity of the Jewish Freedom Movement in 6-74 A.D.," *The Zealots* (1989), 380-404 (first in German, **1974**)

M. Stern, "Sicarii and Zealots," *Society and Religion in the Second Temple Period* (World History of the Jewish People 8; **1977**), 263-301, 374-377

"Schürer", "Appendix B: The Fourth Philosophy: Sicarii and Zealots," *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, II (**1979**), 598-606. **No chapter at all on "Zealots" in the original Schürer.**

M. Smith [d. **1991**], "The Troublemakers," *The Cambridge History of Judaism* (ed. W. Horbury, W. D. Davies, and J. Sturdy, 1999), 501-568

In sum,

A major flourishing of scholarship on an ancient Jewish movement, which hitherto had been of little interest to Christians, was generated, in great measure, by Christian, especially *German* Christian, self-examination concerning the role of Christianity in fostering the Holocaust.

Once, however, such self-examination issued in more direct results, such as Vatican II (1962-1965) and “*nostra Aetate*,” scholarship, and believing Christians, could back away from the more radical and specific claims concerning Jesus.

With that, Christian interest waned – around the same time that the Yom Kippur War and then the Lebanese War put a damper on Israeli enthusiasm about militant nationalism. But in the meantime scholarship had progressed in its understanding of the diversity of ancient Jewish rebels, as also – of Josephus’s portrayal of them.

Thank you